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ABSTRACT

A review of the literature reveals that several common characteristics are used to describe battered women, e.g., low self-esteem, passive, guilty, depressed, dependent. To test the accuracy of these descriptions, the 16 PF Personality Inventory was administered to 30 battered women. Analyses confirmed that abused women exhibited significantly different scores from the average American woman, although not necessarily on the predicted factors suggested by the literature. The hypothesis that abused women would tend to be somewhat less warm, more emotionally sensitive, suspicious, anxious and guilt-prone than non-battered women was supported. The results indicated that these abused women tended to be of higher intelligence and less rule-bound than average. These women were higher in ego-strength, dominance, and self-sufficiency than expected. The findings suggest that extrapsychic factors need to be considered when describing battered women. (JAC)

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: AN INVESTIGATION OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE BATTERED WOMAN

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Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southestern Psychological Association, New Orleans, LA, March 24-27, 1982.

Hypotheses

A review of the literature suggests that there are several common characteristics which may describe the battered woman, such as, she has low self-esteem, is passive, submissive, guilty, depressed, socially isolated, insecure, dependent, easily intimidated and dominated, "old fashioned" or traditional. To test the accuracy of this description of battered women, the following hypotheses were investigated:

Hypothesis I: Women who present themselves as recipients of abuse will score significantly lower than the standardized group norms for women as measured by the 16 PF Test on Factors A, C, E, F, H, Q_1, and Q_2. They will be more reserved, have lower ego strength, be more submissive, sober, timid, conservative and more group-dependent.

Hypothesis II: Women who present themselves as recipients of abuse will score significantly higher than the standardized group norms for women as measured by the 16 PF Test on Factors I, L, O, and Q4. They will be more tender-minded, suspicious, guilt-prone and tense.

Subjects Used

The population of this study were 30 women who were identified as battered. The women had been physically injured or harmed by some act of aggression by their male partner on more than one occasion, which resulted in physical injury. The acts of aggression ranged from slapping and hitting to more severe forms of violence, such as broken bones, knife or gunshot wounds.

This study was limited to women who admitted to being abused and were willing to participate in filling out a personality inventory.

Procedure

The 16 PF Personality Inventory was administered to establish a profile of the battered woman and identify common clusters of personality characteristics.

The 16 PF was administered and raw scores for the population tested were totaled and a mean score and standard deviation were derived for the population for each of the 16 factors.

Mean scores for each of the personality clusters were plotted on a 16 PF scale and a profile of the battered woman was thus developed.

Hypotheses were tested for significance comparing sten scores for the battered women with the sten scores for the Standardized Population of American Women as used in the 16 PF. Results were tabled, and through the use of a t-test,

significant or non-significant differences between the 16 PF standardized scores for American women and abused women samples were determined.

Hypothesis I

The first hypothesis of this study states that women who present themselves as recipients of abuse will score significantly lower than the standardized group norms for women on Factors A (warmth)

C (ego strength)

E (dominance)
F (impulsivity)
H (boldness)

Q_1 (rebelliousness)

Q_2 (self-sufficiency)
as measured by the 16 PF Test.

Table 1 contains the summary statistics relevant to this hypothesis.

Table 1. Levels of Significance for Factors in Hypothesis I

N = 30 (one-tailed test)

Factor		16 PF Norms for Women		Arndt Group		Significance
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
A	(Warmth)	5.50	2.00	4.90	1.95	.05
C	(Ego Strength)	5.50	2.00	5.53	2.43	NS
E	(Dominance)	5.50	2.00	7.13	1.85	NS
F	(Impulsivity)	5.50	2.00	6.67	1.73	NS
H	(Boldness)	5.50	2.00	6.37	2.14	NS
Q_1	(Rebelliousness)	5.50	2.00	5.83	2.51	NS
Q_2	(Self-Sufficiency)	5.50	2.00	6.15	2.00	NS

Factor A (warmth) was the only factor in Hypothesis I that showed a statistically significant difference. That is, the abused women in this study were somewhat less warm than the measured norm. People who score low on Factor A tend to be detached, cool, skeptical and aloof.

Although it was predicted that abused women would have lower ego strength, would be humble and submissive, sober, shy, conservative and less self-sufficient, these predictions did not show significant differences when compared to the average female population norms. In fact, it will be noted that these women scored higher than the average population norms on Factors E, F, H, and Q_2. That is, abused women in this study had higher ego strength, were more dominant, happy-go-lucky, bold and self-sufficient than the average female population norms. They scored higher and in the opposite direction to that which had been predicted.

However, since these results were surprising and contrary to the review of the literature, a two-tailed test was also conducted in order to compare the results of the Arndt group with the American female population norms.

Table 2 shows the level of significance at the .05 level.

Table 2. Levels of Significance for Factors in Hypothesis I

N = 30 (two-tailed test)

Factor	16 PF Norms for Women		Arndt Group		Significance
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
A (Warmth)	5.50	2.00	4.90	1.95	NS
C (Ego Strength)	5.50	2.00	5.53	2,43	NS
E (Dominance)	5.50	2.00	7.13	1.85	.05*
F (Impulsivity)	5.50	2.00	6.67	1.73	.05*
H (Boldness)	5.50	2.00	6.37	2.14	.05*
Q_1 (Rebelliousness)	5.50	2.00	5.83	2.51	NS
Q_2 (Self-Sufficiency)	5.50	2.00	6.15	2.00	.05*

The overall profile derived from Hypothesis I using a two-tailed test depicts the abused woman as slightly more reserved, detached, cool and impersonal (Factor A); slightly more emotionally stable, mature, calm and patient (Factor C).

Assertive, aggressive, authoritative, competitive, stubborn (Factor E).
Happy-go-lucky, impulsively lively, enthusiastic, and heedless (Factor F).

Venturesome, socially bold, uninhibited, spontaneous (Factor H).
Slightly more experimenting, liberal, analytical, and innovative (Factor Q_1)

Self-sufficient, resourceful, preferring own decisions (Factor Q_2).

What is most surprising is the fact that the four factors showing statistical

significance: Factor E (Dominance)

F (Impulsivity)

H (Boldness)

Q_2 (Self-sufficiency)

were significant in the direction opposite to the one predicted.

This gives a substantially different view of the abused woman from the traditional one of being passive, submissive, docile, restrained, sober, shy, timid and a follower.

On the contrary, these women scored higher on the factors depicting them as assertive, self-assured, independent minded, cheerful, active, frank, expressive and carefree.

Furthermore, women scoring high on these factors are sociable, bold, ready to try new things, spontaneous, and abundant in emotional response. Their "thick-skinnedness" enables them to persevere in dealing with people and grueling emotional situations without fatigue.

And, finally, the women who scored high on these factors are temperamentally independent, accustomed to going their own way, making decisions and taking action on their own.

Thus, out of seven factors predicted, only one Factor (A) supports Hypothesis I. However, four factors were statistically significant in the opposite direction, giving an unexpectedly different view of the abused woman from that depicted in the literature.

Hypothesis II

The second hypothesis states that women who present themselves as recipients of abuse will score significantly higher on:

Factors I (Emotional sensitivity)

L (Suspiciousness)

O (Guilt-proneness)

Q_4 (Free-floating anxiety)

than the standardized group norms for women as measured by the 16 PF Test.

The mean scores are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Levels of Significance for Factors in Hypothesis II

N = 30 (one-tailed test)

Factor	16 PF Norms for Women		Arndt Group		Significance	two-tailed test
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
I (Emotional Sensitivity)	5.50	2.00	6.47	1.55	.001	.05
L (Suspiciousness)	5.50	2.00	6.47	1.91	.001	.05
O (Guilt-Proneness)	5.50	2.00	5.93	2.21	.05	NS
Q_4 (Free-floating Anxiety)	5.50	2.00	6.07	1.68	.05	.05

The analysis of the data in Table 3 indicates significant differences at the statistical test on these factors. That is, the abused women in this study were more emotionally sensitive, more suspicious, more guilt-prone, tense and anxious than the American female population norms.

People who score high on Factor I tend to be emotionally sensitive, day-dreaming, artistically fastidious, and fanciful. They are sometimes demanding of attention and help, impatient, dependent, temperamental, and not very realistic. They dislike crude people and rough occupations.

People who score high on Factor L tend to be mistrusting and doubtful. They are often involved in their own egos and are self-opinionated and interested in internal, mental life. Usually they are deliberate in their actions, unconcerned about other people, and poor team members.

Persons with high scores on Factor O have a strong sense of obligation and high expectations of themselves. They tend to worry and feel anxious and guilt-stricken over difficulties. Often they do not feel accepted in groups or free to participate.

Individuals who score high on Factor Q_4 tend to be tense, restless, fretful, impatient, and hard-driving. They are often fatigued, but unable to remain inactive. In groups they take a poor view of the degree of unity, orderliness, and leadership. Their frustration represents an excess of stimulated, but undischarged drive.

Summary of Results of Hypotheses I and II

An examination of the results of testing Hypotheses I and II supports the notion that abused women will exhibit significantly different scores from the average American female population on a personality inventory, although apparently not on the predicted factors as suggested by the literature.

Of the 11 factors included in Hypotheses I and II, only five factors support the hypothesis in the direction predicted. These scores were statistically significant and support the hypothesis that abused women are somewhat less warm, are more emotionally sensitive, more suspicious, more guilt-prone, and more anxious than the average American female population.

In addition, there were two factors not included in the hypotheses that also were statistically significant; Factor B (Intelligence) and Factor G (Group-conformity) showed the abused women in this study to be higher in intelligence and less rule-bound than the average American female population. What is most interesting in the testing of Hypothesis I is the observation that these abused women scored significantly higher than the average American female population in the opposite direction to that predicted. These women were higher in ego strength, dominance, boldness and self-sufficiency rather than lower as originally predicted.

Since the findings of Hypothesis I were contrary to what is found in the literature, this writer utilized the results of this study with the IPAT Computer and derived a composite profile of the group under study.

The results of this composite give the following personality capsule description:

> Her capacity for abstract verbal skills appears to be somewhat above average. She is a dominant person, and probably needs to be in some position of authority in her work life in order to function comfortably. She is a cheerful, lively, somewhat immature and impulsive person who tends, on occasion, to impress others as being too spontaneous and uninhibited.

The following charts show that this composite falls well within the average in regard to personality traits, clinical signs and syndromes and interpersonal patterns.

This composite shows that women who have been in a battering situation still maintain a picture of a normal personality. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that when one describes a battered woman, extrapsychic factors rather than intrapsychic factors may need to be considered.

Illustration I

Alice Anonymous

October 20, 1980

PRIMARY PERSONALITY TRAITS

	LOW 1	2	3	4	AVERAGE 5	6	7	8	HIGH 9	10		
A					X						Warmth	5
B							X				Intelligence	7
C						X					Ego Strength	6
E							X				Dominance	7
F							X				Impulsivity	7
G					X						Group Conformity	5
H						X					Boldness	6
I						X					Tender-Mindedness	6
L						X					Suspiciousness	6
M					X						Imagination	5
N					X						Shrewdness	5
O						X					Guilt Proneness	6
Q1						X					Rebelliousness	6
Q2						X					Self-Sufficiency	6
Q3					X						Compulsivity	5
Q4						X					Free-Floating Anxiety	6

CLINICAL SIGNS AND SYNDROMES

	LOW 1	2	3	4	AVERAGE 5	6	7	8	HIGH 9	10		
ANX						X					Anxiety	5.7
NEU					X						Neuroticism	4.9
PSY					X						Psychoticism	5.1
SOC							X				Sociopathy	6.3
BC						X					Behavior Control	5.2

INTERPERSONAL PATTERNS

	LOW 1	2	3	4	AVERAGE 5	6	7	8	HIGH 9	10		
EX							X				Extraversion	6.2
LD						X					Leadership	5.9
IN							X				Independence	6.4

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